

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister John Fredrik Reinfeldt of Sweden

November 2, 2009

President Obama. I am thrilled to have the Prime Minister of Sweden with us here today. We have had occasion to meet fairly frequently this year between all the various summits that we've participated in. I've always been struck by the Prime Minister's thoughtful, measured approach to some of the most important global challenges that we face.

We had a very constructive discussion on a range of issues. At the top of the list was the issue of climate change. We're approaching the Copenhagen negotiations that will be taking place in December, and both Sweden, the United States—and, I think it's fair to say, the EU as a whole and the world as a whole—are interested in an outcome that can start moving us down the path of a sustainable economy that is not accelerating the potential catastrophe of climate change.

Sweden has been a real leader in this. We appreciate their leadership. We are confident that if all countries involved recognize this is a unique opportunity, that we can get an important deal done, not that solves every problem on this issue, but takes an important step forward and lays the groundwork for further progress in the future.

We also discussed Afghanistan. I thanked Fredrik for the contributions of Sweden to the very important effort of stabilizing a country that has been war-torn and is a source of security concerns for all of us. And to the extent that the European Union continues to make contributions on the civilian front, on the training of police, on development issues like agriculture, then we think that we can see real progress.

I should use this moment to say that about an hour ago, I spoke with President Karzai, and I congratulated him on his election for a second term as President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Although the process was messy, I'm pleased to say that the final outcome was determined in accordance with Afghan law, which I think is very important, not only for the international community that has so much invested in Afghan success but, most importantly, is important for the Afghan people, that the results were in accordance with and followed the rules laid down by the Afghan Constitution.

I did emphasize to President Karzai that the American people and the international community as a whole want to continue to partner with him and his Government in achieving prosperity and security in Afghanistan. But I emphasized that this has to be a point in time in which we begin to write a new chapter based on improved governance, a much more serious effort to eradicate corruption, joint efforts to accelerate the training of Afghan security forces so that the Afghan people can provide for their own security. That kind of coordination and a sense on the part of President Karzai that after some difficult years in which there's been some drift, that in fact, he's going to move boldly and forcefully forward and take advantage of the international community's interest in his country to initiate reforms internally. That has to be one of our highest priorities.

He assured me that he understood the importance of this moment, but as I indicated to him, the proof is not going to be in words; it's going to be in deeds. And we are looking forward

to consulting closely with his Government in the weeks and months to come to assure that the Afghan people are actually seeing progress on the ground.

The last point I would just make, the European Union, obviously, is an important trading partner of ours. We are seeing a world economy stabilize after a very difficult period of time. I think Fredrik would agree that it is absolutely critical that we continue to coordinate closely when it comes to our economic policies to assure that we are moving in a direction of more robust growth that creates more jobs in the United States and in Europe and that we continue to shy away from any protectionist measures that might actually reverse some of these positive trends.

So once again, welcome. Thank you for your outstanding work both as Prime Minister and as President. And please communicate the very warm feelings that the United States people have towards the people of Sweden.

Prime Minister Reinfeldt. Yes, we will.

Well, thank you very much, Barack. As you said, we have met on several occasions. We share excellent bilateral relations. And this is also a strong transatlantic link, which is very important for us.

We have discussed, as mentioned, the Afghanistan situation. And the European Union has also said that we're glad that we now can see a second term for Karzai, that it's now concluded. We talked about long-term commitment in Afghanistan. We actually have 500 Swedish troops there. We're up to 35,000 now on the European Union side. It's very important, as Barack mentioned, to see this as both creating security but also in governance issues, which would be of utmost importance to have a ownership of their own in creating sustainable working conditions, living conditions for the people of Afghanistan.

The main issue was, as it often is now, the climate issue. We need to work together. We need to find ours—find each other in the process to meet the two-degree target when it comes to Copenhagen and the time thereafter. And we have spoken today, I think, about that again.

So I thank you very much for your leadership on that issue.

President Obama. Thank you for the visit.

Prime Minister Reinfeldt. Thank you.

President Obama. Okay, guys, thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:45 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Prime Minister Reinfeldt also spoke in his capacity as President of the European Council.

Categories: Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Sweden, Prime Minister Reinfeldt.

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